



## November 18, 2018 - What Anchors Us

Given by Rev. Mattei

From the floods through Indonesia, Europe and the Middle East to the fires on our West Coast we have been reminded yet again of the damaging effects of climate change. Human life has been lost and survivors are left with unimaginable emotional distress. If we add to the mix the desolation and desperation of those fleeing war-ravaged or crime-infested countries or try to flee the poverty the current global economical setting has procured, the human toll reaches apocalyptic proportions.

Jesus promised the end of the world would not be seen before we hear of wars and rumors of wars ([Mk 13:1-8](#)), but we have been hearing that sad news for centuries now. We are moving in that direction, but is the end coming anytime soon? Nobody knows, Jesus says ([Mk 13:32](#)); yet, what's important is that one remains vigilant, steadfast and diligent (Mk 13:13.23.33.37) referring to Jesus' word as definitive (v. 23) and eternal (v. 31). One could even say that Jesus is challenging us to pay attention to what it is we are paying attention. To his disciples glorifying the splendor of the Temple, probably awestruck at the creative craftsmanship, the skillful engineering and social progress Jesus replies with a shocking news: everything, even the Temple, sign of pious religiosity and national pride, shall come to pass. Then one needs to ask: What's important to us? What principles motivate us? What do we base our life on?

Jesus' consistent theme and guiding principle is the ancient Law: Love God and love your neighbor ([Mark 12:28-34](#)). That's the message of the whole Law and of the prophets, and the heart of the gospel that was "once for all entrusted to the saints" ([Jude 3](#)). The Word of Life as demonstrated by Christ's love shapes our opinions and informs our truth. The Word is our point of reference, the sure foundation to our living and the lamp to our steps. It may not give us clear solutions to our challenges but it strengthens us from within and assures us of God's closeness and dedication to us even and especially when we make wrong turns and find ourselves in a bind ([Isaiah 30:21-22](#)), opening our mind to see that the present suffering are but birth pangs of future life to be revealed.

The community of believers, saints past and present, gathers around the Word, is engaged in spiritual conversation, is instructed on the Way, corrected and restored to the image and likeness of God, and as a result rejoices in resurrection light ([Luke 24:13-35](#)). Theology is borne of communal witnessing, prayer and adherence to the teachings ([Deuteronomy 5:32-33](#); [Hebrews 12:1](#); and [13:17](#)). In times of chaos and distress, we hold fast to the Word of Life ([Philippians 2:16](#)), knowing that to cling to the gospel is really to cling to Jesus.

Military people are fond to use a quote attributed to the 7th century BC Greek poet, Archilochus: “We don't rise to the level of our expectations, we fall to the level of our training.” As Christians, what do we train into? What's our default system when under pressure and in times of trial? The Bible tells us the story of a God who like a shepherd does not tire to search for his lost sheep; a gentle and humble God who entices us with a Mother's love with no strings attached; a patient Parent who showers his long-lost son with life-giving blessings. The stories of Jesus' life, death and resurrection model to us the compassion, kindness, generosity, inclusivity, and justice of God. Those stories become for Christians the go-to Reference when questions arise, the Anchor in the storms of life, the Lamp for our journey, the Presence in our darkness, the Companion in our loneliness. And even when we feel lost and don't know where to turn, God is the solid Rock that gives us shelter and courage; God is the Bread for the journey. As a child of God, how do I live in my flesh the Word of life entrusted to me? How do I give God the glory? If the Word is your source of Life and Joy, would you let others know?

Engaging with the Bible daily, reading spiritual literature, participating in Bible studies roots us in the story of God whom we discover is already part of our story. Seek God while He may be found ([Isaiah 55:6-13](#)) in the daily events of life. Ask yourself: Where is God to be found in the local and global current events, in my conversations with friends and family of opposite views? Where is God in the tragedies of life and in the cruelty human beings are capable of inflicting on other human beings? Even in those moments, God is near and does not abandon us.

May the Word of Life sustain and guide us. May we drink from the source of Life